

WEATHER FORECAST

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	KHULNA	BARISAL	RANGPUR	COX'S BAZAR
	H 25.6 L 14.0	H 28.6 L 15.2	H 27.2 L 13.2	H 17.2 L 13.2	H 24.7 L 14.0	H 26.2 L 12.4	H 20.0 L 12.6	H 29.0 L 16.0

Light rain or drizzle is likely to occur at one or two places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions with the regions of Jessore and Kushtia till 6:00pm today, reports UNB. Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said. **The sun sets in the capital today at 5:30pm and rises tomorrow at 6:44am.** Country's highest temperature 29.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday in Teknaf and lowest 9.8 in Sreemangal.



Waterlilies bloom in Barisal's Shaplar Beel giving the area not only an aesthetic appeal but also helping locals of Ujirpur's Shatla union earn some extra money on being sold as a food item. The scenario prevails for most of the year till the dry winter months when the landscape dons first a green and then a golden hue with the cultivation of Boro paddy. The photos were taken last month.

PHOTO: ARIFUR RAHMAN

Report shows decrease in armed robbery against ships

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The number of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Bangladesh have fallen significantly over the past few years, said a report of ICC International Maritime Bureau. A total of three ships came under attack last year, while the number was 11 in 2015; 21 in 2014; 12 in 2013 and 11 in 2012, stated the report titled "Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships". Robbers usually target ships preparing to anchor. Most attacks reported at Chittagong anchorages. However, attacks in Bangladesh have fallen, it revealed yesterday. The ICC International Maritime Bureau (IMB), a specialised division of the UK-based International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), prepared the report analysing worldwide

Shaplar Beel: Blend of beauty, utility exemplified

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barisal

A vast tract of land in Barisal has turned into a glaring example of how nature can open up its treasure trove all year round irrespective of the season when its bounties are harvested in moderation and with due respect. For most of the year, the around 4,000 hectares of the land in Ujirpur's Shatla union remains covered in water with the surface blooming with thousands of waterlilies, for which it is aptly called Shaplar Beel or "Lake of Waterlilies". Being just around 60 kilometres from Barisal city helps draw visitors who take delight in admiring the dazzling pink spectacle. Apart from being decorative, many parts of the plants are edible since the stalk, young leaves and unopened flower buds can be consumed raw or boiled to be served as a vegetable. This makes numerous families dependent on the plant as a source of income, collecting it for sale at local markets. The shade from the plants helps reduce the growth of algae while the tangle of underwater vegetation offers shelter to a myriad of fish including walking

fish, butter fish and mullet. This resource aids in meeting the daily protein and nutrient requirement of the locals and provides an added source of earning. The landscape dons another look from the start of December. As the water recedes, some 200 farmers, with permission from the upazila administration, plant the Boro variety of rice. The farmers are aided by the fact that the land requires no irrigation or chemical fertiliser, Deputy Agriculture Officer Md Rafiqul Islam told The Daily Star recently. The farmers say they just clear the land of weed before the fertile soil slowly turns into a sea of swaying green. The paddy ripens as the months pass and the golden glimmer of the harvest further brings a smile to the faces of the locals. Only this crop is cultivated in the area and the scenario prevails till March when the rains arrive, once again filling the lake for the cycle to be repeated once again. Shaplar Beel is a valuable lifeline for thousands of families with, as Upazila Nirbahi Officer Jumur Bala points out, the locals maintaining the balance of nature while attaining food security.

HC starts appeal hearing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday started hearing on the death reference and appeals in the sensational Rakib murder case in Khulna. The bench of Justice Jahangir Hossain and Justice Md Jahangir Hossain fixed today for resuming the hearing. On August 3, 2015, Rakib's former employer Omar Sharif and his accomplice and uncle Mintu Khan stripped the boy naked, inserted a high-pressure air pump nozzle into his rectum and filled the abdomen with air, as a punishment for changing workplace. Rakib's intestines tore apart and lungs burst as air filled the abdomen, which left him dead. The killing of the 13-year-old sparked outrage all over the country then.



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PM's FLIGHT GLITCH Two more Biman staff remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed two engineers of Biman Bangladesh Airlines on a seven-day remand each, a day after their arrest in connection with a case filed over the technical glitch of Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina's flight. Metropolitan Magistrate Nurunnahar Yasmeen passed the order after Mahbub Alam, an inspector of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit and also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, produced them before it with a 10-day remand prayer. The two Biman staff are Shah Alam, engineer (technician) and Najmul Haq, engineer (officer). They were arrested on Monday, according to the court sources. They were not FIR-named accused. In the yesterday's forwarding report, the IO said that they were present during the time of checking the flight before departure. So they need to be remanded to find out vital clues about the PM's plane glitch. Earlier, seven Biman officials were arrested and two surrendered. Of them, seven are now in jail after they were quizzed in remand for 15 days while two others are on a seven-day remand. On November 27, a VVIP flight to Budapest with the prime minister made the emergency landing at Ashgabat International Airport in Turkmenistan after a loose nut caused an oil leak and subsequent oil pressure loss in engine-1 of the Boeing 777-300ER, according to the Biman probe.

Youth held over spreading girl's obscene photos on Internet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth was arrested in the capital's Hazaribagh on Monday on the charge of spreading obscene photos and video clips of a seventh-grader on the Internet. Morshed Hasan Tanvir, 20, in the area, also sent the pictures and video clips to the girl's friends, family members and herschoolteachers. She was expelled from the school, police quoted the family as saying. Mollah Nazrul Islam, special superintendent of police of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) said Tanvir earlier dated the girl and blackmailed her into having sex. As she refused to continue to do so, he started spreading the photos and clips, he added. The arrest was made after the family sued Morshed, who confessed to committing the crimes, said Nazrul. Police seized his electronic devices. "We will also look into the role of the schoolteachers and see why she was expelled," he said.



A large number of vehicles get stuck on a road in the capital's Kakrail around 11:30am yesterday following traffic restrictions imposed on some major streets on the occasion of Awami League's rally at Suhrawardy Udyan.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

HC likely to hold hearing today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) today might hold hearing on the petition filed by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia challenging the trial proceedings of a sedition case against her. Khaleda submitted the petition through her lawyers on January 5 praying to the HC seeking stay on the proceedings of the case, which was lodged for her comments on the count of 1971 martyrs. The bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Md Ataur Rahman Khan might hold hearing on the petition today, said Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Md Bashirullah.

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TEKNAF ANSAR CAMP ATTACK Looted arms recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Naikhongchhari upazila of Bandarban recovered a large cache of firearms arms and ammunition including five firearms and 189 bullets that were looted from an Ansar camp in Teknaf last year after killing the camp commander. The arms recovered during the operation include five local pistols and 26 more bullets. The search and recovery operation was launched by Rab around midnight on Monday with three suspected "Rohingya terrorists", whom Rab had arrested earlier the same night, Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed told journalists at a press briefing in Tombru Pura Pahar area yesterday.



The recovered firearms and ammunition

PHOTO: STAFF

The three suspected "Rohingya terrorists", arrested from Kutupalang area in Ukhiya upazila, were identified as Myanmarese citizens Khairul Amin, Master Abul Kalam Azad and, said Lt Col Ashequr Rahman, company commander of Cox's Bazar Rab camp.

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Motorcyclist killed as train hits his bike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

A motorcyclist was killed as a train crashed into his crossing point near Kurigram Railway Station in Belgachha of Kurigram Sadar yesterday. The deceased was Elius Ali, 27, of West Kalyan village in Belgachha. Police said Elius was crossing the rail track when the Ramna-bound mail train crashed into his vehicle around 12:30pm. He died on the spot, said Rawshan Kabir, inspector (investigation) of Kurigram Sadar Police Station. The rail crossing was open as there was no gate-man, said Rawshan. The body was handed over to his family, said police.

Study tour ends in mishap

Over 50, including school students, hurt as bus hits tree in Pirojpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Over 50 people, including school students, were injured as a bus, hired for an educational tour, hit a roadside tree in Baro Biraljhuri village under Kawkhali upazila of Pirojpur yesterday morning. All the injured, including 40 with serious injures, were sent to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, Rajapur Upazila Health Complex in Jhalakathi and Kawkhali Upazila Health Complex. Faruk Hossain, assistant director of Barisal fire service and civil defence, said two buses -- carrying students and teachers from Alankarkathi MR High School -- were heading towards Shat Gambuj Mosque in Bagerhat on a study tour. On the way, one of the buses -- the one carrying boys -- hit a roadside tree around 9:00am as the driver lost his control over the vehicle leading to the accident. On information, fire-fighters from Kawkhali and Barishal, Rab members and cops from nearby police stations rushed to the spot and sent the injured after rescuing them.

Two die in road crashes

CITY DESK

A pick-up van driver was killed as a Bogra-bound truck rammmed his vehicle on Bogra-Rajshahi road in Ranbagha village under Nandigram upazila of Bogra yesterday. The deceased was Tarajul Islam, 30, of Medenipara under Shibganj upazila in the district. He died on the spot. In another accident in Chapainawabganj town, a man was killed as a truck hit him at the Puraton Bazar kitchen market yesterday. The deceased Mohammad Shahin, 26, of Mosjidpara in the town. He worked as a labourer at the market. Mazharul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sadar Model Police Station, said the accident occurred around 1:30pm while Shahin was working at the kitchen market.



A bamboo pole serves as a warning for a sewer opening on the road opposite Newmarket Police Station in the capital, posing the risk of an accident for oncoming traffic. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: STAFF